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## REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTICES.

FIELD ORNITHOLOGY.\*—So much depends upon accurate and thorough field-work that ornithologists will heartily thank Dr. Coues for his excellent "Manual of Instruction," for it contains just the hints, if followed, to give the highest value to the work of the collector. Poorly prepared skins are unsightly enough, and indeed, a genuine eye-sore in cabinets, but if accompanied by detailed notes of date and locality, with a further record of sex and measurements, they have a far higher scientific value than if in themselves without blemish, but lacked these essential items of information. In this small volume of one hundred and sixteen pages, Dr. Coues has treated the general subject of collecting in a very detailed and highly satisfactory manner, his varied experience in the field, and his knowledge of what constitutes good working material, fitting him eminently for the task he has here attempted. Beginning with the selection and care of guns, ammunition and general equipments, he treats in the following chapters of how, where and when to seek for birds, and of how to handle and carry them when obtained; of note-taking, labelling and measuring, determining sex, etc.; of the preparation of bird-skins, with directions also for mounting; for collecting and preserving nests and eggs, making cabinets, and guarding collections against insect pests, etc. Assuming the reader's total ignorance of the subject, he adopts an easy, familiar style, with here and there a raciness that relieves the tediousness of the details which necessarily go to make up works of this class.

In respect to one point, however, we beg leave to differ from our accomplished author, and that is in respect to *baking skins* to rid them of insect pests. The process is undoubtedly thoroughly efficacious as regards the destruction of the insects, but, what is also of some importance, the baking nearly ruins the skins, rendering them extremely fragile. Bird skins, however, seem to suffer much less by this process than mammal skins, which baking once or twice is usually sufficient to utterly ruin,

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\*Field Ornithology. Comprising a Manual of Instruction for procuring, preparing, and preserving Birds, and a Check List of North American Birds. By Dr. Elliott Coues, U. S. A. Salem: Naturalists' Agency. Boston: Estes & Lauriat. New York: Dodd & Mead, 1874.

sometimes causing them to fall almost in pieces of their own weight. The present writer, although having had the care of one of the largest collections of skins in this county for over ten years, has never yet found it necessary to bake a skin to rid it of insects, having accomplished it by other means. Drenching a skin in the best quality of benzine is far preferable to baking, but this is objectionable from its sometimes (generally only after several applications) leaving a sticky residuum on the plumage. A better process is that of thorough fumigation with the bi-sulphide of carbon, which may be accomplished without the offensiveness of the fumes being very apparent by using a tight fumigating box or chest made expressly for this purpose.

The "Check List," though bound with the Manual, is essentially a distinct publication, being also issued separately. It is intended for use in labelling collections, and is hence printed on only one side of the paper. The two together form a supplement to the Key, of which they were originally intended to form a part. The "Check List" is a publication of more importance than to some its name might seem to imply. It is based, the author tells us, on the Key, and "reflects exactly whatever of truth or error that work represents." It differs quite materially from the Smithsonian Check List, published in 1858, as it very naturally should, in order to properly represent the present state of ornithological science in this country. Its greatest modification pertains, perhaps, to the system of nomenclature itself, through the introduction of varietal names. This, the recent advances in American ornithology have rendered imperatively necessary for the proper recognition of the numerous intergrading forms which result from different conditions of environment. But, aside from this, the present list differs from the former in containing much fewer generic names; in embracing some fifty species added to the North American fauna since 1858, and in the exclusion of about 150 of the specific names of the former list, from their being "extra-limital, invalid or otherwise untenable," though a large proportion of them still appear in the varietal designations. As already indicated, the "Check List" is a reproduction of the names used in the Key, with, however, the addition of authorities for both the specific and varietal names, including not only the name of the describer of the species or variety, but also the authority for the present association of the names in question. It also includes

a number of species and varieties published since the appearance of the Key, the list being brought down to April of the present year. In his preface the author alludes to the "many needless and burdensome generic names," unfortunately adopted in Prof. Baird's great work, "for," he adds, "sanctioned by the usage of such high authority, they have passed current, and are too closely ingrained in our nomenclature to be soon eradicated." This, however, only represents one of the phases through which our science has passed, and which was not wholly without redeeming features, however true it may be that the time has come for us to rid ourselves of such now useless relics. During the publication of the Key, Dr. Coues instituted this needed reform, but too late for its systematic application throughout the class. The land birds were hence left in this respect unchanged, while in the generic names of the waders and swimmers we were carried back again to the days of Audubon, the genera adopted being essentially those of his Synopsis. The publication of the "Check List" seemed to present a favorable opportunity for a similar restriction among the land birds, which our author has failed to improve. It is hence a matter of regret that he has rigidly adhered to the Key, instead of departing from it sufficiently to have given us a consistent system of generic names throughout.—J. A. A.

THE BUTTERFLIES OF NORTH AMERICA.\*—The success (in every way but a pecuniary one) of the first series of this admirable work, has led to the publication of a second. This will not be strictly confined to the descriptions and delineations of new species, but the metamorphoses of species before described will be given, a much more important matter than the description and illustration of new species, unless accompanied by life histories. The plates of this new part are thoroughly well done; a little more attention, however, to the drawing of the larvæ and pupæ would add to the perfect accuracy of the figures devoted to them, though the faults we perceive in one or two cases, *i. e.* an indistinctness of outline of the body and its parts, may be due to the printer. We wish the pages could be numbered, for ease in future reference. The text is lucid and interesting, the plates are not inferior to the best ever published in Europe, and the work is in every way a

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\*The Butterflies of North America, with colored drawings and descriptions. By W. H. Edwards. Second Series, Part I. New York: Hurd and Houghton. May, 1874. 4to, pp. 18 and 5 colored plates. \$2.50 a part.